

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 SY-05 /106 W
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R 131137Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8691
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3913

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PEPR LE SY
SUBJ: VIEWS OF PHALANGE POLITBURO MEMBER ON CURRENT SITUATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO KARIM PAKRADOUNI, RENEWED FIGHTING IS ALMOST CERTAIN. SARKIS IS LIKELY TO BE "THE LAST PRESIDENT OF LEBANON" IF HE RESIGNS NOW. THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE ESSENTIALLY INTERESTED IN PARTITION, NOT COMPROMISE. THE ISRAELIS HAVE PROMISED THE CHRISTIANS AIR BUT NOT GROUND SUPPORT. THE SYRIANS HAVE POSED NO CONDITIONS FOR A CEASE-FIRE. ALL THE ARAB STATES, INCLUDING EGYPT, SUPPORT THE SYRIANS IN THEIR CONFLICT WITH THE CHRISTIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFFS MET JULY 11 WITH PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI AT BAABDA PALACE. PAKRADOUNI, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHO IS LIVING AT THE PALACE NOW, SAID THE FOLLOWING.

3. THERE SEEMED TO BE TWO POSSIBILITIES AT THE CURRENT JUNCTURE: IF THE ADF STAYED, THERE WOULD BE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND SYRIANS. IF THE ADF LEFT, THERE WOULD BE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS.

4. SARKIS WAS LIKELY TO BE "THE LAST PRESIDENT OF LEBANON." IT WOULD BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE LEBANESE TO AGREE ON A SUCCESSOR. PARKADOUNI FEARED THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO CHOOSE A SUCCESSOR WOULD IN ITSELF LEAD TO VIOLENCE. PAKRADOUNI HAD IMPRESSION THAT FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS WAS THE PRINCIPAL FIGURE URGING SARKIS TO RESIGN. "AFTER EVERY MEETING WITH BOUTROS, SARKIS SEEMS AS IF HE HAS BEEN DEFEATED."

5. IN CONTRAST, PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS WAS STRONGLY URGING THE PRESIDENT NOT REPEAT NOT TO RESIGN. HOSS HIMSELF WOULD NOT VOLUNTARILY RESIGN HIS OFFICE IN ORDER TO FACILITATE SARKIS' RESIGNATION. (THE PRESIDENT COULD FIRE THE PRIME MINISTER).

6. SARKIS THUS HAD A DILEMMA: IF HE APPOINTED A NEW PRIME MINISTER (PRESUMABLY A MARONITE, ACCORDING TO THE 1952 PRECEDENT), THE MOSLEMS AND LEFTISTS WOULD BE INCENSED. IF HE RESIGNED WITHOUT APPOINTING A NEW PRIME MINISTER, LEAVING A MOSLEM AS HEAD OF A COLLECTIVE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE LEBANESE FRONT WOULD BE INCENSED. EITHER WAY, THE CRISIS IS EXACERBATED, NOT ALLEVIATED.

7. CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL AND BACHIR GEMAYEL WERE ESSENTIALLY INTERESTED IN PARTITION AND NOT IN CONFIDENTIAL

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COMPROMISE. THEY HOPED PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD RESIGN, SINCE THIS WOULD FACILITATE CHRISTIAN AIMS.

8. PAKRADOUNI UNDERSTOOD THE ISRAELIS HAD IN RECENT DAYS TOLD BACHIR THAT HE SHOULD NEITHER ESCALATE THE SITUATION NOR RETREAT; THAT IS, THE MILITIA SHOULD NEITHER SEEK A WIDER CONFLICT AT THE MOMENT NOR GIVE UP THEIR POSITIONS. THE ISRAELIS HAD ALSO TOLD BACHIR THAT THEY WOULD NOT INTERVENE ON THE GROUND IN LEBANON, BUT WOULD OFFER AIR AND NAVAL ARTILLERY SUPPORT. BACHIR, HOWEVER, BELIEVED THAT IF THE ISRAELIS BECAME INVOLVED IN SUCH A WAY, THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO COMMIT TROOPS ON THE GROUND.

9. PAKRADOUNI, WHO HAD BEEN IN DAMASCUS ON JULY 8, SAID THE SYRIANS HAD NO CONDITIONS FOR MAINTAINING THE PRESENT CEASE-FIRE. THEY ONLY INSISTED ON THEIR RIGHT TO DEFEND THEIR ARMY IF IT WERE FIRED UPON. THEY ALSO REFUSED TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE PARTIES AND WOULD DEAL ONLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 3913

10. THE KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTER WHEN HE VISITED BEIRUT ON JULY 9 TOLD THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS THAT ALL THE ARAB STATES, EVEN INCLUDING EGYPT, SUPPORTED THE SYRIANS. (SHAFIQ WAZZAN TOLD EMBOFF THE SAME THING ON JULY 10).

11. THE LEBANESE (PROBABLY BASED ON AN INITIATIVE BY DANY CHAMOUN, AMINE GEMAYEL AND GHASSAN TUENI) HAD ARRANGED AN IMMEDIATE FOUR-STAGE PEACE PLAN WITH THE SYRIANS TO TAKE EFFECT OVER A FOUR-DAY PERIOD:

A. POSITIONING OF INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AT THE QARANTIAN BRIDGE;

B. REOPENING OF SHOPS IN EAST BEIRUT;

C. WITHDRAWAL OF CHRISTIAN MILITIA AND SYRIAN SOLDIERS
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FROM SOME POSITIONS IN EAST BEIRUT; AND

D. STATIONING OF LEBANESE FORCES TO PARTIALLY REPLACE SYRIANS IN EAST BEIRUT.

12. ALTHOUGH JULY 11 WAS THE FIRST DAY OF THE PLAN, AND THE ISF DID IN FACT DEPLOY AT THE BRIDGE, PAKRADOUNI BELIEVED THE PLAN WOULD FAIL IN A FEW DAYS BECAUSE THE MILITIA WOULD NEVER IMPLEMENT WITHDRAWAL. HE SAID THE SYRIANS HAD ALSO INITIALLY REJECTED THE PLAN, BUT BELIEVED THEY COULD BE INDUCED TO ACCEPT IT.

13. PAKRADOUNI ALSO RENDERED HIS ACCOUNT OF THE SYRIAN ARREST OF BACHIR GEMAYEL JULY 1: IT WAS A DAY OF MOURNING IN EAST BEIRUT (FOR THOSE KILLED IN THE BIQA' MASSACRE OF JUNE 28). SOME SYRIAN VEGETABLE VENDORS HAD OFFERED THEIR GOODS FOR SALE ANYWAY. A HASSLE DEVELOPED WITH LOCAL PHALANGISTS, WHO HAD OVERTURNED THEIR CARTS. THE ADF HAD ESTABLISHED A TEMPORARY ROADBLOCK, OF WHICH BACHIR (WHO SYSTEMATICALLY AVOIDS THEM) WAS UNAWARE. HIS HISTORIC PERSONAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE SYRIAN ARMY WAS THUS AMIDST A PILE OF ROTTING VEGETABLES. THE SYRIANS WERE NOT OUT TO GET BACHIR, AND TREATED HIM EXACTLY LIKE ANYONE ELSE CARRYING WEAPONS WITHOUT A PERMIT. PARKER

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